

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the poetry of place in the works of the two most important figures of modern Scottish Gaelic verse: Sorley MacLean (Somhairle MacGill-Eain, 1911-1996) and Derick Thomson (Ruaraidh MacThòmais, 1921-2012). Both poets exhibited a keen interest in poetry of place, although each one approached it from a very different angle: MacLean's poetry is proudly local and audaciously universal at the same time, moving from the Cuillin of Skye to Spain and Russia in the space of one stanza, while Thomson inquires in the ways in which the island environment, in terms of nature, language and religion, shapes the individual psyche, memory and creative abilities, and he is also a significant poet of the city. The opening chapter gives reasons for the choice of these two authors, introduces the structure and method of the thesis, and outlines what is meant by "poetry of place." It also sums up different theoretical approaches to places and discusses important features of Scottish Gaelic poetry of place of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as both poets employed, altered and contradicted certain traditional patterns and motifs. The second chapter provides a context for the subsequent discussion by explaining the basic facts about the linguistic, social and cultural conditions of Gaelic Scotland in the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century. A separate chapter, introduced by a biographical note, is then devoted to Sorley MacLean and Derick Thomson: each presents a selection of relevant poems across the two poets' oeuvres, their contextualization, interpretation and the application of theoretical and critical approaches. The final chapter compares MacLean's and Thomson's approach to poetry of place, comments on general problems concerning poetry of place and sketches suggestions for further research.

Key words: Sorley MacLean, Derick Thomson, modern Scottish Gaelic poetry, places, poetry of place, Raasay, Skye, Lewis, Glasgow